Sinful

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Sinful

by Empress_of_Fools

Summary

Will left the FBI five years ago and returned to Louisiana, joining a small church as their priest. Hannibal is new in town and comes to confession to unburden his soul.

Or

Satan walks the Earth filled with vengeance and wrath, and stumbles upon Lucifer - fallen angel, child of light - in a backwater church in Louisiana and sets upon seducing him.

The Devil Walks In

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will Graham had been settled in the confession box for a short while now and the afternoon heat was already starting to get to him - he could feel a trickle of sweat sliding down his spine, making his shirt stick. He shifted uncomfortably, waiting for members of his congregation to sit in the adjoining cubicle and confess. Ordinarily his small congregation waited patiently after his sermon to take their turn in the confessional, but it seemed today the oppressive Louisianan sun had drawn them outside; and away from the stuffy enclosed space. Will didn't blame them.

Sunlight streamed through the sliding screen separating the two cubicles, playing over his fingers and he was considering calling it quits when the door on the other side of the box opened and shut with an abrupt click.

The screen was meant to reassure the penitent that their confession was between themselves and God alone, that their anonymity would remain intact. In reality, this anonymity was an illusion – especially in a small town in Louisiana with an even smaller religious population. Will always knew who was on the other side of the screen, and they knew he knew, but so long as Will kept up his semi-reclusive lifestyle and his habit of avoiding eye contact with anyone where possible, everyone seemed pretty content with the arrangement.

After a brief moment, a voice came from the other side of the partition.

'Forgive me Father, for I have sinned.'

It was a new voice, allowing Will to instantly pinpoint who the speaker was; the only new adult member his congregation had seen in five years.

The stranger had been to a few sermons now; Will (and everyone else) had noticed him immediately. Flamboyant suits, broad shoulders and dark eyes marked him as an outsider, and an attractive one at that. Although he always sat at the back of the church, Will wondered if it was only his overactive imagination that made him think those eyes lingered on him even after he'd resumed his seat amongst the congregation.

His name…Will struggled to recall what he'd heard his flock murmuring to themselves. Ah, Lecter.

Hannibal Lecter.

The voice was rough but not overly deep, the unfamiliar accent giving it an exotic lilt. It was a voice that beckoned its listeners closer, pouring like sweet honey from lips that had quirked occasionally through the earlier sermon.

‘God is always willing to listen to those who seek his forgiveness. Speak.’

Will kept his tone even; soft, open, gently encouraging the other to spill his secrets, to disgorge himself of the darkness that lurked inside every man’s heart so that he might leave the box feeling lighter, cleaner – while Will would take the spiritual filth into himself, as his profession dictated.

‘I have not been in a church for many years. And I have never made confession before,’ the stranger admitted. He paused, seemingly unsure how to proceed.

‘Just say whatever comes most naturally to you,’ Will said, after a moment, ‘Maybe start with something that is at the forefront of your mind – something that you wish to ask God’s forgiveness for.’

Will could hear Hannibal shifting on the other side of the panel; the rustle of fabric as he crossed his legs. In his mind’s eye, Hannibal smoothed the creases from his trouser leg, though there was no one to see him. Imperfection didn’t suit him, even in Will’s imagination.

‘There are many sins that God may need to forgive me for,’ Hannibal said, dryly. ‘Perhaps we might start with the traditional seven?’

Will nodded, even as he realised that Hannibal couldn’t see him, and made a soothing noise in his throat that he hoped signaled his agreement and an encouragement for Hannibal to continue.

‘I have done many things in my life that I am not proud of: necessary things, things that most men would have done also, had they stood in my place. But, then, perhaps not.’

A soft sigh punctuated the words. Will could almost see the frown on Hannibal’s face; the wrinkled brow, eyebrows drawn together…

‘I have done many good things too, I think. I am a doctor. I was as diligent in my training as I have been with all of my patients. If God has a plan for each of us, then I think I should thank him for setting me upon this path to a career that allows me to help people in the way that I do.’

A doctor? Will carefully filed this information away with what little else he knew about the man, which so far amounted to: attended church, foreign, wore suits, attractive- Will shook himself, tuning in again to Hannibal’s words.

‘I have been proud, arrogant certainly – will God forgive me for that? Is not pride and arrogance necessary in my line of work? A doctor who is uncertain, who constantly questions himself is more of a hindrance than a help to his patients, perhaps even a danger. I have been envious; when I was a boy, I would envy strangers that passed me in the street for living their lives free from pain, and fear, for having what I could not. I hated them for it, though I knew nothing about them. I envied the people who lived beyond the reach of the soviet nightmare to which I had been born; beyond the hunger, the poverty, the cold.’

Will shivered, goose bumps prickling over his skin at the scene his imagination conjured; a small boy, all skinny limbed and dark eyed, looking out at the streets beyond his tiny window, hunger gnawing an ever bigger hole in his belly.

Hannibal cleared his throat, as if banishing the image Will had conjured, and continued.

'I hope that I have rarely been slothful, or greedy; though I do enjoy fine things. I like fine wines, the opera, extravagant dinner parties…I become bored so easily, it is a relief to have some pursuits that allow my mind to become still.'

Will could imagine that; the suits with their vibrant pocket squares would look far more at home sitting at an opera than parked on the shabby benches that lined the church.

'Yes, perhaps I should place gluttony upon the table as well,' Hannibal continued, 'It took me some years after I left the orphanage to realise that food would no longer be taken away from me. Certainly, once food became present I desired it above all else. Thankfully, that passed and my appetites have waned much since those days.'

There was a faint laugh, as if Hannibal was looking fondly back at his past self.

'And lust?' Will asked, feeling the instant flush of embarrassment redden his cheeks, and he hastened to explain himself. 'In my experience, that is the sin that troubles most of my parishioners.'

Hannibal chuckled, a velvety rich sound that ended all too quickly for Will.

'I am sure. Alas, I am not given to such…indiscretions.' Will could almost see the quirked lip that accompanied that statement. 'Although there was someone, once…'

'A friend?' Will asked, trying to curb his curiosity (and failing).

Hannibal hummed, 'Let us say, the friend of a friend of a friend. That would be more accurate.'

'What happened?'

'That, I think, is a story for another time.'

Will, accepting the evasion for what it was, rubbed his hand over the stubble of his jaw thoughtfully.

'For each of the mortal sins, there is an equal and opposite virtue. To please God, we must not only avoid the sin itself but seek to practice its corresponding virtue. For gluttony there is temperance; for greed there is charity, for sloth, diligence. Envy can be salved by kindness; kindness towards those we are envious of.'

'Kindness,' Hannibal murmured, 'There is little enough if it, in this world.' There was a pause, 'And for pride?'

'Humility.'

A dignified snort came from the other side of the confessional, forcing a rare smile from the priest, ‘I thought you might like that one.’ There was a moment of quiet in which Will assumed his new charge was gathering his thoughts, debating on revealing further sins. It was a type of silence he knew well.

‘And then’, Hannibal continued, ‘there is wrath. I have certainly been wrathful, perhaps I would even go as far as saying that it is my biggest sin. But then, is God not also guilty of that?’

‘In the Old Testament, certainly.’ Will mused. ‘How does your wrath manifest?’

‘When I was young I was witness to a great deal of injustice. The world seemed black and white to me: the weak and the strong, the dead and the living, those that deserved death and those that did not. I sought revenge with impunity. Once I was able, I hunted down those who had tortured me, tortured others, hurts those that I held dear…’

Will swallowed dryly, debating on whether to assuage his curiosity or whether he’d be better off not knowing. Curiosity won.

‘What did you do once you found them?’

Hannibal paused, and Will imagined he was looking down at his hands, contemplating whether he was truly going to reveal his darkest acts.

‘I killed them. All of them.’

There was a hush within the confession box, as Will processed this. Although none of his congregation had ever confessed to such things, his work with the FBI meant he was no stranger to blood and death.

‘How did that make you feel?’

‘Justified,’ Hannibal answered in a cold, clear voice; a voice whose words carried the heavy weight of finality. Will can see him in his mind’s eye, a young man kneeling in the snow over the corpse of a monster.

‘It made me wonder whether killing feels good to God too. Aren’t we created in His image? I thought a lot about the nature of God then.’

‘About good and evil?’

‘Those things have nothing to do with God.’

Will frowned. ‘How so?’

‘When I think on how I have sinned, it is not good and evil that my thoughts turn to, it is to God. Why did He fashion us in this way? Why did He make it feel good to do bad things to bad people? Good and evil are His creations. With one hand he creates with miracles, art, angelic choirs; with the other typhoid, famine, and drought.

Does it feel good to God when a church collapses during Sunday mass, killing hundreds of worshipers mid hymn? Does it please Him when diseases he placed upon the Earth bring about death tolls in the millions; the deaths of the young and the old and the weak?

When my sister was butchered and feasted upon, did that please God?'

Hannibal's voice, at first cold and hard as steel, rose steadily – though he didn't shout, his voice filled the small space with righteous anger, with pain, struggling to cover an old wound that had never healed.

That would never heal.

'I don't know what to say to you,' said Will, softly, willing as much empathy and compassion into his voice as he was able, 'I don't have an answer for you; I'm sorry.'

'I doubt it would help even if you did,' Hannibal sighed heavily, 'Perhaps the grace of God might be further from my reach that I had first thought.'

Will shook his head, 'We are all within God's grace. You need only ask for His forgiveness. It is for God that you were given a soul. I am here to help you unburden it.'

Hannibal shifted, unseen, across from his priest, 'What is deemed suitable, for this asking of forgiveness?'

'Ah, a prayer of contrition, of sorrow, for your sins.' Will added soothingly, seeking to reassure the newcomer to his flock. 'Say whatever is in your heart.'

When Hannibal spoke, it was a strange, rough tongue that Will had never heard before – catching at his ears and luring him closer to the screen that separated them to hear the words more clearly. There was a delicious richness to his voice; fluid and, somehow, darker in tone that his softly accented English.

The prayer seemed to wind to a close, Hannibal's gruff 'Amen' confirming it. Will shook himself out of the pleasant cocoon of tranquility the words had wrapped him in, before intoning, 'I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.'

Then, more formally, 'Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.'

Chapter End Notes

You made it to the notes! Thank you so much for reading this far. This is my first ever fanfic so please be kind. You have no idea how much a kudos or comment would mean to me. I'm a massive Hannibal fan - Hannigram is my OTP - and I did my best with theological research. I was not brought up Catholic and thus there are probably mistakes. If there are, feel free to tell me. I just had to use my imagination!

Have a bit of Priest

Chapter Summary

In which a Priest is invited to dinner

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

In the nights following Hannibal's confession, Will's dreams return.

There is a shadow across his vision – a dark figure with mighty antlers sprouting from the crown of its head, dark as an oil spill. He feels hot breath on the back of his neck and turns to face the monstrous stag that has followed him home from church. He reaches out to run a hand along its flank and his fingers discover that there are thick feathers covering its hide.

Suddenly, pain shoots across his back and he is screaming. He's pierced, mounted on the shadow figures antlers like a piece of meat. His spine is a whip cord of agony as his muscles split and the bones of his shoulders groan and flex. Soon, he is forced to his knees as his flesh reforms itself, sinews sprout from his wounds as wings erupt from his back. With a great heave they spread, feathers damp with blood.

When he wakes, his throat is raw from screaming and his back aches.

Hannibal glides into the dining room with two plates balanced on his arm, one of which he sets upon the table in front of Will with a flourish. 'Veal stuffed with spinach, mushrooms and bread crumbs, with a Cumberland sauce.'

The sauce is a violent red slash across the bone white of the high-end porcelain. Will tries to think whether he's ever so much as owned matching cutlery. 'Cumberland?' he queries.

Hannibal undoes the buttons on his jacket and settles himself opposite Will, smiling, 'Port, red currant jelly, raspberries and orange juice.'

'This is the closest you can get, ethically, to eating people,' Will finds the words tripping off his tongue without so much as a by-your-leave. 'William Seabrook cooked a piece of human flesh in the '30s. Said it tasted like veal.'

Hannibal has paused, wine glass part way to his lips, staring at Will with a carefully neutral expression. Will clamps his eyes shut in mortification, wincing. **'**I'm sorry, I don't make for a good dinner guest.' He feels his shoulders hunching in embarrassment and he pushes his glasses up the bridge of his nose anxiously.

After a short pause, Hannibal wonders aloud, 'I wonder which piece it was.'

Will focuses on the rims of his glasses, agitated. 'I can't- I'm not very good at civilised conversation.'

There's a slight tilt to Hannibal's head as he ponders this for a moment, before saying, 'Everything you have to say is of worth, Will. As for myself, I would be honoured if you were to share your thoughts with me, no matter what they are.'

There's a pause while Will lets this sink in, gulping his wine in an attempt to cover his embarrassment. The wine is not something he is used to – he notes how Hannibal holds the stem of his glass delicately, pausing to sample its scent before tasting, leaving him with a satisfied smile. Will knows his pallet is not at all refined and finds himself wondering what nuances Hannibal is getting from the wine, what tastes linger on his tongue. Will cuts of his train of thought before it gets a chance to linger any more on the taste of his hosts tongue. He makes a mental note not to keep gulping the wine. He's sure Hannibal won't appreciate it and he's doubly sure his inhibitions don't need any extra encouragement.

Hannibal watches him with approval as he notes Will modifying his behaviour to match Hannibal, mimicking his respectful treatment of the wine. It stirs something within him that he can only liken to the raw, animal hunger with which he considers the rude and yet somehow...deeper. He examines the feeling - not a new one as such but rather one that had long been slumbering only now to be awakened.

As he watches the priest begin to eat there's a deep, satisfied purr begging to be released from his chest. The parting of Will's lips around the first bite of 'veal', the quirk of a smile as he finds the taste pleasurable albeit unfamiliar. He suspects that should he devour Will he would never have his fill of him.

'What did you do before you joined the Church?'

'I was a cop. Homicide detective in New Orleans.'

'Really?' Hannibal is intrigued.

Will shrugs. 'I don't talk about it much. People tend to…get the wrong idea.'

'And what idea is that?'

There's another shrug, but this one is a little looser as though Will is warming to the idea of sharing this part of himself with Hannibal.

'People build up a certain image of you when you say you were in law enforcement. Strong, capable, good with a gun.' He sips his wine again, thoughtfully. 'Good at

confrontation.'

'I expect many people might find that attractive.'

Will frowns. 'A few.'

'You don't enjoy confrontation then? Is that why you left?'

'I couldn't pull the trigger when I needed to.'

'So you left for the Church?'

Will snorts, 'No, no. The Church was much later. I left to do forensics at grad school. Then worked for the FBI in behavioural science.'

'You were an FBI agent?'

'No.' The interjection comes quickly and sharply. 'Special investigator. They, uh, have strict screening procedures.'

'I see.'

Will fidgets with his fork awkwardly for a few moments. 'I taught psychological profiling at the academy for a while. Then, there was a case. I shot someone.'

'Was it an accident?'

Will's laugh is sharp and bitter. 'No. No, no. I meant to shoot. It took me ten shots to put them down.'

'Do you want to talk about it?'

Hannibal's voice is soft; an offer rather than a demand. Will isn't used to that. Usually people are practically *panting* with morbid fascination when he tells this story - or any aspect of his FBI past. It's a relief, really, when he looks at Hannibal and finds only patience and an offer of understanding.

'There was a serial killer in Minnesota,' he begins, 'the Shrike, we called him. Killed eight college girls the same age, with the same eyes and hair as his daughter. I tracked him to his house – I was just following up on a hunch. His wife's body was on the front porch and he was holed up in the kitchen about to slit his daughter's throat. I didn't have a choice.'

'Did she die? The daughter?'

'No. Hobbs partially cut her throat but she survived. Still get a card from her at Christmas.' Hannibal watches Will's face go soft and distant for a few moments as if marvelling anew at the life he had saved.

'You're a hero then.'

Will's mouth twists and he levels a sour look at his dinner companion, which Hannibal is utterly unfazed by.

'When did you leave the FBI?'

'After my stint in a mental hospital.' The words are stiff with old, dried up anguish and there's a firmness to his mouth that, along with the raised chin, dare Hannibal to challenge him on them. 'Didn't think going back to the FBI would be good for me, even though they wanted me back.' Will is peering into his wine class, frowning. 'Jack still calls me for a consult.'

'Jack?'

'Head of the BAU - the behavioural analysis unit. Jack Crawford. He knows I have a knack for the monsters. I'd be back in the field in a hot second if he had his way.'

Hannibal studies him intently before asking, 'Did you really feel so bad because killing that man felt so good?'

Will stills, staring at Hannibal across the table.

'Doing bad things to bad people makes us feel good. It gives us a sense of justice.'

'What are you, a shrink?' Will responds, going for dry amusement, missing the mark entirely and instead sounding bristly and defensive.

'Yes.' Hannibal flashes a shark-like smile. 'Our old lives are always hovering in the shadows, following when we try to leave them behind. It must be difficult to find peace when your past literally comes calling.'

Will sets his attention back to his meal, mind spinning. He berates himself for sharing so much so soon. He wishes he'd known about Hannibal's proclivities for psychoanalysis before agreeing to dinner. Why *had* he agreed? Then berates himself again because he knows *exactly* why, when Hannibal approached him the previous Sunday, all polite smiles and well-tailored expensive suit, asking if he'd do him the honour of joining him for dinner, that Will had seen no other choice than to agree. Hannibal was new to the area and, as he had confessed sheepishly, he had only made a few acquaintances so far and even fewer friends. 'It has been too long since I have had a friend to dinner,' Hannibal had said, all old-world manners and unabashed pleasure when Will had agreed.

Will Graham has never thought of himself as the sort of guy who has a 'type'. But it's becoming increasingly apparent to him that of all the types that he definitely doesn't have, dark-eyed, dashing Lithuanian doctors in outlandish-yet-surprisingly-flattering suits, that make him weak at the knees and prevent him from being able to utter the word 'no', are definitely his *not-type*.

'Perhaps,' Hannibal says after a few moments of quiet observation, 'we should talk about sin instead?'

‘Do you have anything you want to confess?’ Will asks, eyebrows quirked in amusement.

Hannibal smiles around his fork. ‘There is one sin we have not covered I think.’

Will’s mouth is suddenly and inexplicably dry and he licks his lips nervously. ‘Oh? Which one?’

‘Lust.’ Hannibal finds himself utterly charmed at Will’s response to his words and his failed attempt to remain calm. He watches him lick his lips, and smiles, ruefully. ‘I fear I have not been entirely honest.’

‘Oh?’ Will’s voice emerges hoarse and so he sets about filling his mouth with food in an attempt to save himself.

‘I said I rarely succumbed to such things,’ Hannibal continues, ‘but there is more to sin that the act itself, yes? To carry lust in your heart is something you must still seek forgiveness for.’

Will inclines his head in agreement, thankfully muted by his mouthful of veal.

‘I came to pleasure very late in life. My early experiences deadened any possible interest I could have held for the pursuits of the flesh. Eventually however, I allowed my curiosity to get the better of me – I thought it would cure me of my...*restless* nature. I allowed myself to be seduced.’

Will thinks back to the confession box. ‘Is this the friend of a friend?’

Hannibal nods in confirmation.

After a few moments of quiet, Will can’t help himself from asking, ‘What was she like?’

Hannibal hesitates. ‘Some ten years older than me, and married; though I did not know it at the time.’ He hangs his head, abashed, ‘You must think ill of me.’

Will lets one shoulder lift and fall. ‘All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God,’ he says, though it sounds mechanical, like the repetition of something learned by rote long ago rather than a true admonishment.

‘It is not something I have ever sought to be forgiven for.’ Hannibal gazes into the middle distance for a moment. ‘It was a long time ago. And I was very naïve.’

‘Not all sins carry equal weight, Hannibal.’

Hannibal cocks his head a little to one side, curiously.

‘What you’re describing is at best a venial, rather than a mortal, sin,’ Will explains, somewhat uneasily. ‘An act committed without full knowledge, or without deliberate and complete consent is a venial sin. The Church teaches that it is the mortal sins that truly weigh down our souls, keeping us from the glory of God.’ He rubs the back of his neck distractedly. He wishes he had better words to offer; ones that made him sound less...preachy.

‘And what is it that you teach, in your sermons?’ Hannibal inquires.

Will smiles ruefully. ‘Seeking answers in the arms of another is no grave matter, Hannibal. It’s an intrinsic part of the human condition. We question, we despair, we strive for understanding.’

In a rare moment of daring, he raises his eyes to meet Hannibal’s gaze. ‘If this were a confession, I would offer you forgiveness. Absolution.’

‘Perhaps.’ Hannibal’s lowered eyes and chagrined expression *pull* at Will, urging him to provide comfort. A hand on the shoulder perhaps or, maybe, on the cheek so that his thumb might map the rangy cheekbones that taunt him from across the table.

‘Did you know each sin has an associated demonic aspect?’ Will offers, desperately searching for something that might lighten the atmosphere between them. Demons seemed like a appropriate segue.

‘Asmodeus is the one most often associated with lust.’

Hannibal’s mouth twitches, charmed by the priest’s conversational flailing. ‘The creature of judgement. A Persian devil originally, was he not?’ He moves to refill their wine glasses, fingers briefly coming into contact with Will’s,‘Overcome by the archangel Raphael and banished to Upper Egypt.’

‘The demon of impurity,’ Will raises his glass in a mock toast, forcing a spontaneous grin from his companion.

‘God creates darkness and light with equal abandon – even the demons and devils of Hell were once his highest servants, creatures of light. Asmodeus and his kind were seraphim before the fall.’

‘The higher they rise, the harder they fall,’ Will shrugs.

‘Indeed,’ Hannibal inclines his head in agreement. ‘Seraphim are usually regarded as the highest order of the angelic hosts.’

‘Beings who presided over love, light, and fire.’

‘Interesting then that such a being would become the champion for the lusts of mankind.’

Will raises an eyebrow, ‘Hardly surprising though.’

‘Perhaps lust and its assorted acts are simply love and fire, seen through a different lens?’ Maroon eyes glint in the low light of the dining room, paying careful attention to every movement his guest makes, settling on the tender throat as Will swallows his wine.

Will hums speculatively, ‘A dark and smoky lens perhaps.’

‘Tell me Will, what is the opposite virtue for lust? Chastity?’

‘Yes. That’s one of the reasons monks take vows of chastity. It’s a sacred virtue.’

‘I’m curious – do you keep yourself chaste in order to please God?’

Will’s stomach flutters alarmingly at the inquiry, feeling an accompanying heat rising in his cheeks as he answers, ‘Among other reasons.’ Out of the corner of his eye he can see Hannibal looking at him, offering a tilt of the head that suggested encouragement but not obligation, to divulge the other reasons.

‘Socialising is difficult for me,’ the priest says cautiously, ‘most people prefer a man who can make eye contact.’

‘Not fond of that, are you.’

‘Eyes are distracting.’ Will explains, deliberately skimming the edge of Hannibal’s gaze, instead focusing on the curve of his cheek, the shadow lurking beneath his jaw, the shape of his mouth as Hannibal purses his lips.

‘Philosophers would have us believe they are the windows to the soul.’

‘Yeah well, I can read too much in people as it is, without needing to see into their souls.’

‘What do you see then, when you read people?’

‘Their thoughts, feelings, fears. I can empathise with them – with anyone, even the monsters – so completely that, for a short while, I can become them. I can reconstruct their thinking perfectly. Most people find it unsettling.’ Will’s smile is brittle as he says, ‘they don’t find that sort of thing a turn on.’

‘An oversight on their part.’ Hannibal assures him, voice deep and rumbling.

Will ducks his head, drawing into himself as he tries to get the rioting butterflies in his stomach under control. He tightens his grip on the wineglass, frowning when he realised he must have emptied it. Hannibal, ever the gracious host, moves smoothly to refill the glass, then pouring another for himself.

Hannibal lets him fidget in silence for a few moments before rising. ‘Time for dessert, I think.’ He gathers their empty dinner plates and carries them back to the kitchen. Will takes the opportunity out from under Hannibal’s scrutiny to let out a shaky breath. He gazes around the room distractedly.

The herb garden being cultivated on the opposite wall intrigues him and provides some much needed light and greenery to an otherwise darkly decorated room. There's a chandelier of black glass and crystal which should, by all rights, look tacky but seems to wilfully defy the priest’s expectations, instead hanging elegant and austere above the dining table.

The table centrepiece of ostrich eggs in a nest of feathers leads Will to conclude that, at least where interior decorating is concerned, Dr Lecter’s tastes veer towards the extravagant. The whole house - the little that he's seen if it - exudes an unselfconsciously eccentric

aesthetic that Will could only describe as the offspring of the Gothic and art nouveau. At least that's what he thinks it looks like. He's never really been that into art.

Thankfully, Hannibal returns with dessert before Will is forced to further contemplate his lack of affinity with the arts.

‘I have had great success recently in keeping my sweet tooth under control,’ he says, smiling broadly as he presents Will with a delicate white chocolate cake garnished with cream and nuts, before settling back into his chair.

‘But some temptations-’ he pauses to chuckle at his guest’s frankly enthusiastic response to the first bite of cake.

‘Some temptations are not worth resisting.’

Chapter End Notes

Huzzah! A second chapter cometh!

This chapter had a particularly difficult birth which is why it took so long to update. Fun fact: chapter 3 is where all the fun happens and it was written way before the first 2 chapters. I just couldn't get Hannibal to shut up, which turned a quick 'n' dirty Priest!Kink into 3 chapters about theology.

Pretty please leave a comment if you're feeling generous - this author is lonely and in desperate need of validation and feedback.

This is not beta read, all mistakes are my own. I own nothing. And yes, the chapter title is a nod to Sweeney Todd

False Idols

Chapter Summary

In which Will considers the nature of idolatry.

Chapter Notes

drum roll LE GRANDE UPDATE!
Okay, it's been 2 years. A lot happened in my life, things got bad, things got better, they got worse again, then 2020. I mean, what even was that? This chapter has been about half complete for all of that time and then I finally got hit with a bolt of inspiration over Christmas, resulting in the creation of 3k of filthy Priest!kink. You're welcome!
Congrats for surviving 2020 and special thanks to my darling Beta Storybelle (check out her stuff on Ao3).

Will has worshipped at the altar of false idols before.

Jack Crawford, head of the BAU and Will's de facto handler during his time as a special investigator, had recruited him out of his teaching post at the academy to play at being a force for good, on the side of the angels. Rapists, cannibals, the criminally disturbed - Jack brought them all to his pet empath and Will would willingly fling the doors of his consciousness wide open, and pry the deeds of these sinners from behind their eyes. Glad to be of use in Jack's holy war. But Jack was a false god. There was no fanfare when Will succeeded in his quests, no acknowledgement of his having fulfilled his duty. Only an endless cycle of more horror. Will's refusals were met with indifference, manipulation, wrath and, sometimes, violence. Will had believed himself weak for giving in until years and several hundred miles later allowed him to gain some perspective.

Jack was just a man; as weak and petty as any other. He couldn't offer the absolution that Will had so desperately craved. Jack likely didn't care what WIll needed, one way or the other, or at least he only cared about his well being in so far as he could use it for his own ends.

Will's worship of Hannibal Lecter is an entirely different beast.

The man consumes his waking thoughts - appearing apropos nothing to slither into his head between otherwise mundane thoughts regarding morning coffee (black and bitter as pitch) and whether his newest canine companion could be trusted off the leash yet (a definite no, it turns out later).

Even during his infrequent prayers suddenly the scent of Hannibal's aftershave would invade his nostrils, overpowering any previous desire for communion with a distant godhead and filling his head instead with *hannibalhannibalhannibal,* the refrain pulsing in time with the unsteady beat of his heart.

He dreams of taking the doctor's proffered hand to stand side by side with him before a set of burning gates, Hannibal's palm warm and dry in his. Maroon eyes hide a smile at their edges and Will feels an answering tightness in his body as if in response to an unspoken question, or proposition. When Hannibal looks away from him it's as if the sun has gone behind the clouds, leaving the world dim and cold.

Sometimes, the Hannibal of his dreams is a ghost of ash and shadow, barely visible. A few times he has had wings of purest silver fledging from between his shoulder blades, cold as ice to the touch but when Will ventures to touch them Hannibal moans in a hot, ancient tongue. On nights like this Will wakes with the taste of dust and ash in his mouth and an urgent stiffness in his boxers.

Will knows idolatry is a sin but damn if it doesn't feel just fine.

He's finally forced to admit, to himself if no one else, that he has been avoiding Hannibal. And he only admits it because, when he hears a parishioner enter and shut the door to the confession box he knows instinctively that it is Hannibal on the other side of the screen and this knowledge makes his heart sink. This heavy sinking feeling, of being trapped with no easy means of escape, is vehemently contested by the strange flip-flop sensation in the pit of his belly and the steadily rising heat just below that. Will coughs and attempts to rearrange his limbs in the least comfortable (and therefore least arousing) way possible, grateful for the screen. He is in such an internal fluster that he almost misses the first words of the confessor.

‘Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned.’

This part at least is formulaic, Will reasons. There are only a set number of responses he can give and so perhaps he will survive this encounter with his dignity intact.

‘How have you sinned, my son?’

‘I have been having…’ There is a pause, barely long enough for Will to become intrigued as to the direction of this particular conversation, before the doctor continues, ‘ *impure* thoughts about someone. A friend.’

‘Have you acted upon these thoughts?’ Will keeps his voice soft, determined not to let his own thoughts colour his responses.

‘No.’

‘By impure you mean…?’

‘Lustful,’ the other man responds, and then, ‘Sexual,’ as if the point needed to be underscored.

‘Love and desire are part of human nature. There are ways you can channel the impurity of your thoughts into something more positive – invite the person to dinner, perhaps?’ This felt trite and, had it been anyone other than Hannibal, Will would certainly have answered differently. But his thoughts have already been overrun with jealousy of the object of Hannibal’s affection.

Hannibal seems hesitant to respond. ‘It is someone at church. Someone I dare not approach.’ Will experiences a rush of wildly contracting emotions: vindictive approval that

Hannibal would not approach this person, elation that they were in the congregation, disappointment that it was not him.

‘I don’t think he would appreciate my intent.’ Hannibal lingers upon the pronoun, drawing it out and letting it settle on his tongue. Will suppresses a brief shiver.

He.

‘And what *is* your intent?’ The priest asks **,** the hush of the confessional booth somehow both protective and confining.

‘To devour him’. Hannibal allows as much yearning to bleed into his voice as possible, giving his words a hint of tongue and teeth, rolling his eyes briefly upwards and letting a sigh settle on his lips.

There is a pause as he waits for a response from the priest.

His priest.

‘Father?’

Will clears his throat. ‘It’s alright, go on. I’m listening,’ he assures, ignoring the increased palpitations of his heart and the prickle of sweat upon his brow.

‘He is beautiful,’ Hannibal responds earnestly, the penitent taking the cue to unburden himself in the sacred darkness of the confessional space. ‘Truly he is one of God’s finest creations. No matter how I try to empty my mind, his face lingers behind my eyelids as I fall asleep, his voice lingers in my ears. He is a distraction at church, to the extent that I consider not attending – but my resolve is weak. I tell myself I will put up with the discomfort his presence causes so that I might simply continue attending services but,’ Hannibal spits the last few words with bitter resentment, ‘that is a lie I tell myself. I ache for him.’

Will becomes intimately aware of the heat pooling between his thighs, and his quiet panting making the small space uncomfortably warm. He tugs anxiously at his collar in an attempt to cool down. Why did it suddenly seem so hard to breathe?

'I imagine how his face would look lit up with pleasure; the feel of his tongue in my mouth. Whether he would smother his moans or cry out in ecstasy. I torment myself by wondering whether he would be appalled by my interest, whether he would find me too dark, too broad, for his tastes.' Hannibal allows himself a quiet sigh, filled with just enough envy to carry the words to the ears straining to hear him beyond the partition. 'He could have his pick of the women here if he noticed them. Sometimes, he catches my eye across the crowded sermon, and smiles, and I imagine that it is a secret smile shared between us two and I can't help my body responding to him.'

Will – tugging his hands through his hair in a desperate attempt to take his mind off his dick – can imagine Hannibal on his knees, looking up at him through his long fringe, maroon eyes dark with lust. Will imagines threading a hand through the hair at the back of Hannibal's head, urging him closer. In his mind's eye, Hannibal mouths over his dick through the cloth of Will's trousers, holding steady eye contact. Will drags one thumb along Hannibal's bottom lip, through the spit that glistens there. Coming back to himself, Will squirms – empathy and the power of his own imagination will be his undoing – creating a vivid picture of Hannibal sucking him off. Forcing himself to remain in the present, Will presses the heels of his palms against his eyes, and arches back, seeking relief from the persistent ache between his legs, and tries desperately to pay attention to whatever it is that Hannibal is saying.

'My dreams have been troubled, of late.'

'What happens in your dreams?'

'Everything,' Hannibal says breathlessly. 'I don't want forgiveness. I know that is wrong – I should want to be forgiven for this unnatural lust that hungers in my head and in my heart. I should be ashamed of myself, disguising my desires as friendship and respect. But it is not forgiveness that I want. I want him spread out beneath me like a banquet, panting from exertion; flushed and full with pleasure.'

Will, giving in to a moment of weakness, palms himself through his clothes, inhaling suddenly though his nose. Hannibal cocks his head to one side and sniffs delicately, the smell of sweat and arousal floating like pollen through the gaps in the screen, and he allows himself a vicious, satisfied grin.

Will clears his throat. ‘Homosexual attraction is not a sin, Hannibal.’

The doctor huffs a disbelieving laugh, ‘I have always been led to believe otherwise.’

‘Strictly speaking,’ Will chooses his words carefully, ‘it is my understanding that the Church only sees the *act* rather than the attraction as being sinful. Just as seeking sexual pleasure for pleasure’s sake is deemed sinful.’

‘So it is only the... *act* itself that I might be condemned for?’ Hannibal smiles to himself. There are oh so many acts he intends for Will, each more damning that the last.

Will bites his lip viciously to bring his focus back to the conversation, ‘The Church has a policy of love and compassion for those with...desires like yours.’ His imagines himself spread out upon one of Hannibal’s lush carpets, expensive wine dripping from Hannibal’s fingers as he traces Will’s lips, staining them claret red, for Will to suck them clean. It’s so vivid he can almost taste it. ‘We are all equally guilty of being sinners, what lies in your heart places you no further from God than I.’ Ah, if only that were true. Hannibal’s intentions are no doubt far less depraved than his own. The things Will’s mind is capable of would make the Devil blush.

‘What should I do?’

‘Confess your shortcomings to God,’ the priest says breathlessly, as he begs silently for his own forgiveness, his own salvation.

On the other side of the screen, Doctor Lecter frowns, ‘I cannot ask forgiveness for something I do not feel sorry for – God would know it to be a lie.’

‘Perhaps feeling something is wrong and knowing it to be wrong are two different things. Mind over matter, my son.’ After all, Will reasons, the persistent press of his erection certainly didn’t feel wrong, but he knew without a shadow of a doubt that jerking off to Hannibal’s confession was a sin so shameful it would send him straight to Hell. He breathes an almost staggering sigh of relief when his penitent acquiesces, murmuring his repentance to the Lord, before removing himself from the confessional box. All the priest had to do now was wait a few minutes for his...problem to subside and sneak out of the church without running into any other parishioners.

‘Will?’ Hannibal’s voice comes as a surprise, sending his hand skittering guiltily away from his belt. ‘Are you alright?’

Will wipes the sweat from his top lip, stuttering, ‘Yes, yes I’m fine.’

‘Are you going to come out?’ the doctor asks, curiously, ‘You did promise me dinner, after all.’

Fuck it all, he had promised that hadn’t he? Fuck.

‘Ah, we might have to postpone that. I…I’m not feeling too great,’ he says weakly, the excuse sounds feeble even to his own ears.

‘Will,’ Hannibal’s voice is a lot closer this time; directly on the other side of the door of the priest side of the confession box. ‘Is there something wrong?’

‘No, no, nothing.’ Will panics, crossing his legs and hunching himself over as the door slides open.

‘Are you feeling unwell?’ Hannibal’s eyebrows are furrowed with concern, ‘I am a doctor, I can help.’

‘No, Hannibal, there really is no need-,’ Will falters as he catches Hannibal’s gaze. Maroon eyes widen, flickering between the priest’s tortured posture, the flush of his cheeks, and his hands clenched protectively over his crotch. ‘Oh.’

Will breaks the stare quickly, jerking his head away to hide his flaming cheeks. ‘I- sorry.’ He closes his eyes, praying to God to open the ground beneath him and swallow him up. Anything to escape the shame of being caught in this state by Hannibal.

A hand finds Will’s jaw, tilting it upwards.

‘Will,’ the doctor’s voice seems deeper, rougher, and it licks across Will’s skin in a way that was electrifying.

‘You have nothing to be ashamed of.’ Hannibal traces a thumb along the younger man’s full bottom lip reverently. Stepping inside the small space, he crowds Will further against the back panel, before pulling the door closed, inwardly delighted when the move causes Will’s breathing to double its already frantic pace.

Hannibal slides to the floor before easing back onto his ankles and gripping Will at the knees. The priest lets out a strangled, wounded groan – the sight of Hannibal on his knees before him was like having his most secret desire plucked from his lusting heart and spread out before him. He bites his lip, trying to gather his thoughts enough to string a sentence together.

‘We shouldn’t-’ he cuts himself off as the older man runs his hands firmly up his thighs, prying them apart gently. Hannibal flickers his eyes down coyly, pressing a cheek to the inside of his thigh. ‘Tell me to stop and I will, he murmurs.

Will pants desperately, trying to sort his muddled thoughts. This was wrong, and bad, and *sinful.* Hadn’t they just been talking about sin? Hadn’t he just been offering absolution? His foremost thought though is that Hannibal’s mouth looked like sin incarnate and wouldn’t it be wonderful to have that mouth on him…kissing him…sucking him…As if sensing the bent of Will’s thoughts, Hannibal’s tongue dragged across his bottom lip; saliva glistening in the dim light.

When it becomes clear that Will is either unwilling or unable to respond, Hannibal's hands wander to his belt, tugging the leather through the buckle to unbutton and unzip his trousers.

He doesn't bother to pull them all the way down, merely bends his head to Will's rigid cock, trapped beneath the fabric of his boxers and mouths over it – gently, with the barest hint of contact between his lips and Will's erection, dragging a desperate whine from the priest.

'Ugh,'

'Will,' Hannibal's voice filled the small space, darkly promising, 'You must ask me, if you want it.'

You have to invite the devil in.

Fingers tease at the waistband of his underwear and Will clenches his fingers restlessly. He can feel Hannibal's mouth cruelly hovering above his crotch, the heat of his breath enough to make the blood rush to his already swollen cock but not enough for Will to get any relief. He wrestles with himself to put his desires into words. He's never said anything like this out loud; has never needed to, has never had the opportunity to explore…this. And now he is being handed it on a silver platter, if only he can summon the courage to reach out and take it.

Just ask for it.

'I want…' he begins, voice breathy and soft. He clears his throat, 'Please, I- I want you to put your mouth on it.'

'On what?' Hannibal asks, coyly.

'On my cock,'

'Like this?'

‘Ahh,’ Will moans, jerking his hips, ‘Yeah- uh, I mean,’ Will groans with frustration as Hannibal moves his mouth away entirely, planting his hands in the doctor’s hair to prevent his escape.

Hannibal practically purrs with approval.

‘I want you to put it in your mouth. Suck it,’ Will rushes, ‘Suck me off.’

Deft surgeon’s fingers hook themselves over his waistband and tug the underwear down to his knees. Will hisses at the sensation of air on the sensitive head of his cock. Hannibal looks up at him through dark eyelashes, eyes drinking in the sight of Will about to become undone. There is something infinitely satisfying about this moment and everything that has led to it; the priest in his confession box, begging to be deflowered by Hannibal and his wicked tongue.

He shuffles forwards a little on his knees, headless of the potential damage to his suit – having Will like this is more than worth a little wear and tear.

Will tries desperately to keep his eager hips under control as the doctor oh so slowly lowers his head to his cock and licks a stripe along it with the flat of his tongue. Said tongue lingers at the head of his cock, swirling around it, before swallowing the entire length deep, deep into Hannibal’s throat.

‘Ahh, *fuck* ,’ Will moans, as the exquisite heat of Hannibal’s mouth envelops him. Conscious of his grasp on the other man’s hair, Will loosens his grip and flattens his palms to prevent himself from clawing at Hannibal’s scalp. This elicits a grumble of dissatisfaction from the man between his legs, who grips Will’s hand in his and firmly places it at the back of his skull. Taking the hint, Will tightens his grip, tugging experimentally. Hannibal moans around his cock, bobbing his head enthusiastically.

Will gasps out a groan as a clever tongue presses against his slit, just before he’s released from the glorious mouth with an obscene pop. He doesn’t have time to complain however before he is taken firmly in hand.

Pumping and twisting with his wrist, Hannibal whispers hoarsely, ‘How would you finish, Will? Would you come like this, all over my hand, all over yourself, so that people might know what sins you’ve delighted in committing?’ He presses cruelly down on the sensitive spot just below the head of Will’s cock, causing him to cry out.

An almost feral grin painted itself across Hannibal’s face as he goes on, ‘Or would you rather fuck my mouth and have me swallow you down as you scream God’s name?’

Will can feel the tell-tale warmth gathering in his belly as his partner’s words send shivers along his spine. God, the man had such a mouth on him. In more ways than one.

‘Fuck, Hannibal,’ he stutters, and the other smirks.

‘If you like.’

‘God, I’m going to come. You’re going to make me come.’ Will’s voice held the edge of panicked anticipation; he didn’t want to finish so soon, he didn’t want to stop, he wanted this to go on forever. But the release was building quickly inside him, there was no way he was going to last much longer.

‘Will, choose.’

‘Mouth,’ he whines, ‘in your mouth.’

Hannibal surges up to press his mouth messily to Will’s, less a kiss and more a press of wet lips and teeth, tongue plundering the priest’s mouth with abandon. Then fingers are being pressed against Will’s tongue and he sucks them greedily, without thinking.

‘So good for me, dear Will,’ Hannibal croons, as his other hand tugs gently at Will’s balls, making his eyes roll up into his head. When he judges his fingers are wet enough, he draws back reluctantly from Will’s mouth, which is plush and swollen like an overripe berry. He shoulders Will’s thighs further apart, dragging trousers down to his ankles. He licks the pearls

of precome from Will's tip and presses saliva-slick fingers back behind Will's balls, along the crease between his legs, then back further still. The noise Will produces can only be described as a wail, his back arching and hips thrusting out towards the promising heat of Hannibal's mouth.

'Is this what you want, Will?' Hannibal groans, fingers pressed against his entrance, Will's cock dragging at his bottom lip. 'Like this?'

'Yes,' Will's voice cracks when he looks down at the other man, nodding breathlessly. 'Please. Do it. Fuck me with your fingers.' It's like a dam has burst inside him and words that had to be forced out before now stream from his lips. 'Just like this. I want to fuck your mouth with your fingers inside me, I want you to make me come, make me come down your throat. I think it'll kill me if you don't. Hannibal, please, please. It's all I've been thinking about since,' he groans as Hannibal's fingers press inexorably into him and he revels in the tender stretch, 'since I met you. I need you. Please. God.' He tightens his fist and without conscious thought, pulls Hannibal's mouth onto his cock.

Hannibal moans around him and after a few hasty sucks, drags Will's length deep into his throat. Will claws at the screen with his free hand, hips writhing as he fucks himself on the other man's fingers and tongue. It cannot last; it feels too good and Will has been on the edge for so long that all it takes is the press of Hannibal's teeth, combined with that delicious suction, and he's tumbling into bliss - spilling himself down Hannibal's throat.

In the aftermath, when clarity finally returns to him, Will gazes down at the man between his legs. Hannibal, glorious in his rumpled suit and mussed-up hair, holds his gaze as he licks him clean, before settling back on his heels. His, rather prominent, Will notes, erection strains against his trouser leg though he makes no move to do anything about it. If anything he looks supremely satisfied with himself and Will can't help but return to look of smug satisfaction.

'I must be dead,' Will muses, as he drags a thumb along a prominent cheekbone. 'This is what Heaven feels like.'

Hannibal smirks and leans into his touch, rumbling 'Don't be so sure. Perhaps this is Hell and we sinners are trapped here in perpetuity.'

'Are you here to punish me then, Devil?'

‘Is that what you want?’

‘Yes. More than anything.’

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